

July 2013

Dear students,

As part of your orientation to Brown, you will participate in a seminar about a book that you and all new Brown students will read this summer. The book we have chosen is *Beautiful Souls: The Courage and Conscience of Ordinary People in Extraordinary Times*, by Eyal Press '92. It has been purchased for you by the Office of the Dean of the College and the Brown Alumni Association. Think of it as a welcome gift from Brown and your first official college reading assignment.

Beautiful Souls explores situations in which individuals choose to defy social norms and to do what seems right, despite great personal risk. These acts of conscience often take place in fraught times and dangerous places. They show people extending compassion to others very different from themselves. As a result, the protagonists are sometimes considered traitors, sometimes heroes. As you join the Brown community—a community we strive to make just and inclusive—we hope that *Beautiful Souls* will help you reflect on the difficult choices that all of us are called upon to make, choices that teach us both the cost and necessity of moral conviction.

We would like you to read this book and to tell us your reactions. What aspects of the book did you find most compelling? Was there anything about the four cases that surprised you or bothered you? Do any of the situations in *Beautiful Souls* remind you of a tough choice that you or someone you know had to make?

Write up your reactions in the form of a letter to your academic advisor. Think of the letter as a way of introducing yourself to your advisor, giving him or her a sense of who you are and how you think. While you are introducing yourself, you should also talk about your goals and aspirations for Brown. What do you consider your areas of strength? Are you concerned about any aspect of your undergraduate education? Are there particular fields that you want to explore? Please submit your letter online at http://apps.college.brown.edu/first_readings/ by August 15, if you are entering this fall, or January 3 if you are entering in the spring. We will make sure it gets into your advisor's hands before your first advising appointment.

I should mention that your letter will be read by a few other people as well. The specialists in Brown's Writing Center will review your letter to get a sense of your strengths or weaknesses as a writer. We will also share a copy with the person who will be leading your seminar discussion on *Beautiful Souls*, and who may want to use your ideas as a starting point for the discussion. For both of these reasons, we ask that you give this first college reading assignment some careful attention and thought.

When you arrive on campus, you will receive a move-in packet containing information about the time and location of your seminar on *Beautiful Souls*, and the name of your discussion leader. We hope this opportunity to meet new friends and discuss ideas will make your orientation to Brown even more meaningful. So enjoy your reading, and don't forget to bring your book when you come to Brown this fall!

All my best,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Katherine Bergeron". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Katherine" and last name "Bergeron" clearly distinguishable.

Katherine Bergeron
Dean of the College